



December, 2005

Special Holiday Edition

Senator Richard Alarcón

News from the 20th District



Inspired Giving: Senator Alarcón hands out Christmas Stockings to some of last year's 7,000 participants.

'Gift of Christmas'

Reaches Twelfth Year of Giving Program Inspired by Senator's Grandparents Lives On

(San Fernando Valley) Richard was just a young boy when he learned an important lesson that's resonated through his entire life. It was almost Christmas, so he went to the church to visit his grandparents in the church hall. They were both busy collecting and preparing toys to hand out to children in the community. Richard's grandparents handed him a small wooden train from among the toys they'd collected. He was thrilled, but the most important gift he received was their lesson in serving others. "I can remember how happy those kids were to receive their gifts. It was the only present some of those kids got that year. I felt so proud of my Grandma and Grandpa."

That boy grew up to be State Senator Richard Alarcón. Alarcón started a similar program upon becoming City Councilman in 1993. Now, in its twelfth year, the Gift of Christmas non-profit foundation's members, volunteers and supporters will once again distribute toys, snacks and stuffed Christmas stockings to at least

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Seniors' Town Hall Allays Fears

(Pacoima, CA) Senator Richard Alarcón hosted a Seniors' Benefits Town Hall meeting on Saturday, October 22, 2005 at the Alicia Broadus-Duncan Senior Multipurpose Center in Pacoima, CA.

Many Seniors and disabled persons have been confused by a bombardment of ads and letters asking them to join the Medicare Prescription Drug Plan D.

Patients who currently get their prescription drugs at little or no cost through the Medi-Cal Program must switch to the new Medicare Prescription Drug Program Plan D. But there are many insurance companies offering this plan and cost levels and types of coverage vary greatly. Like most other insurance programs, there will be deductibles and premiums to pay under these plans.

Many Seniors can save significant amounts of money on their prescription medicines if they select and manage the Medicare Prescription Drug Program to their advantage. But they must be armed with important information. Seniors must select a private insurance provider carefully since some medicines are only available from certain companies. A mistake in

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Senator Alarcón explains the benefits of a college education to Seniors at Kennedy High School.

“Write it Right!” Workshops Help Pave Way into College

The “Write it Right Program” success at-a-glance

- 422 High School Seniors completed and turned in essays with the help of experts who volunteered through the program.
- In all 3,000 seniors at six valley high schools heard the message that college can pave the way to success.
- The “Write It Right” Program and The College Board also gave away \$15,000 in SAT Fee Waivers to Students from Polytechnic, Sylmar, and Kennedy High Schools.

(San Fernando Valley) State Senator Richard Alarcon kicked off the “Write It Right!” Campaign at John H. Francis Polytechnic High School, in Sun Valley on Tuesday, October 25, 2005. The “Write It Right!” project is a series of workshops at valley high schools at which graduating seniors received advice on writing and editing their college application essays. “Gaining admission to colleges and universities has become increasingly competitive. The strength of an applicant’s essay can often be the determining factor in getting selected. But there are scarcely enough resources at local high schools to personally help all the students who are applying for admission to colleges and universities. Additionally, many students are first generation college applicants who need help navigating through the admissions process. The “Write It Right!” program can literally be the stepping stone some of our Valley’s students need to reach their goal of a higher education,” says Senator Alarcón.

Senator Alarcón’s “Write it Right!” program brought together community organizations such as “Project Grad,” and “The College Board.” Several workshops were held at each participating valley-area high school. Approximately 450 graduating seniors also attended the colorful kick-off assembly at “Poly” High where Senator Alarcon talked about the advantages of a college education and promoted the workshops.



Alfredo Gonzalez and Senator Alarcón at the California Small Business Day Awards Luncheon.

Senator Alarcon's Wall of Honor

Alfredo Gonzalez Selected Businessman of the Year Valley Restaurateur called the Embodiment of the American Dream

(Sacramento) Senator Richard Alarcón (D-Van Nuys) introduced San Fernando Valley business owner Alfredo Gonzalez to the California State Senate as his selection as District 20’s Small Businessman of the Year.

Mr. Gonzalez owns or co-owns seven restaurants that are part of the “La Sirenita” family of Mexican eateries. Four of them are in the San Fernando Valley. Senator Alarcón worked with Mr. Gonzalez to locate one of his first restaurants at the redeveloped GM plant in Panorama City. Specializing in sea food dishes, Gonzalez’ “La Sirenita” restaurants now have an outstanding reputation for their cuisine. Senator Alarcon said, “Alfredo is the embodiment and fulfillment of the American Dream.” Gonzalez came to the San Fernando Valley as a young immigrant. He began his career working at the Panorama City Theater as a teenager, where he soon became the manager at a very young age. Even back then, he continually fine tuned his entrepreneurial skills, which he eventually used to open his restaurants. Mr. Gonzalez and his business enterprises hire locally. They employ over one hundred employees, support community activities, and are always available to assist with projects that help others. The Senator says, “Alfredo not only embodies the American dream, he shares it. I am very proud of both Alfredo’s business success and also of his commitment to his community ”

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7,000 children this holiday season. "My grandparents wanted to make sure that none of the children in their community were left out of the special joy of the holidays because of their parents financial troubles. Their concern for the less fortunate is an example that has stayed with me until today." The seven "Gift of Christmas" toy give away sites are as follows:



Gift of Christmas Toy Giveaway Sites

Dec. 8	5pm	Van Nuys State Building,	6150 Van Nuys Blvd.	Van Nuys
Dec. 9	5pm	Mary Immaculate Church	10390 Remick Ave.	Pacoima
Dec. 13	5pm	St. Bridget of Sweden	16711 Gault St.	Van Nuys
Dec. 14	6pm	Our Lady of Peace	15444 Nordhoff St.	N. Hills
Dec. 15	5pm	San Fernando Gardens	10896 Lehigh Ave.	Pacoima
Dec. 16	3:30pm	Guadalupe Comm. Center	21600 Hart St.	Canoga Park
Dec. 17	12pm	Holy Family Mission Church	11551 Arminta St.	N. Hollywood

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enrollment could mean that a desperately needed and potentially life-enhancing medicine is not covered by their insurance company.

Senator Alarcón says, "this is a confusing and in many cases, nerve-racking time for the disabled and Senior Citizens in the Valley and throughout California. Many of them are barely hanging on financially. Yet, a growing number of our Seniors feel their safety net may be threatened by changes such as the proposed privatization of Social Security or new requirements to enroll in complex programs such as the new Medicare Prescription Drug Plan. Our goal for the town hall meeting was to dispel myths and arm the Seniors with the information they need to come out ahead."



Senator Alarcón, (at right) is flanked by participants at the Children's Health Fair.

Senator Alarcon's Health Fair Offered Free Immunizations and Free Eye & Ear Examinations

(San Fernando Valley, CA) Senator Richard Alarcón sponsored a Health Fair on Saturday, Oct. 1, 2005 at Beachy Elementary School in Arleta, CA. Parents were contacted by mail as well as with notes from school and encouraged to bring their children for free eye and ear exams and free immunizations.

The project is in keeping with Senator Alarcon's long-standing commitment to improving health care and education in the 20th District. "We've got to do everything we can to help our kids succeed. It's essential that they can see the chalkboard clearly and hear the teacher well. This was an easy and free way for parents to get their children screened for eyesight or hearing problems."

Children who were accompanied by a parent or adult guardian were also able to have their immunizations updated. The immunizations were also free. Parents and guardians simply needed to present the child's immunization records. "This was especially helpful for parents who could not update their child's immunizations before the beginning of the school year. Best of all, this will help give parents peace of mind that their children are protected against potentially deadly childhood diseases.

Partners for the health fair included: El Proyecto Del Barrio, Kaiser Permanente, And the Los Angeles Unified School District.

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About the Children's Health Fair

"We've got to do everything we can to help our kids succeed. It's essential that we make sure they can see the chalkboard clearly and hear the teacher well."

- Senator Alarcón



A Coveted Gift This Season...

A Home for the Holidays



by Senator Alarcón

This holiday season, many valley residents will be wishing for a place of their own, a place where they and their families can build memories and where they can hang stockings on their very own fireplace. When I was a young parent working my way through college, making ends meet was tough. I understand the obstacles Californians face when working to **reach their dream of home-ownership**. Skyrocketing home prices in Los Angeles makes it almost impossible for many people of low and moderate incomes to buy a house. In fact, the number of people in Los Angeles who own their own homes has dropped to crisis proportions.

That's why now, as your State Senator, I make it a priority to **help make it easier for working families to afford their own homes**.

- I've authored and passed legislation (SB 1656) that provided more than **\$500 Million for the creation of affordable housing**.
- That same bill also created the **Cal Home Program** which provides down-payment assistance and loans for first time home buyers.
- The Cal Home Program also provides funding for programs like Habitat for Humanity so that they can **build more affordable housing**.

And now, I'm writing to you to let you know that help is also available locally. The City of Los Angeles Housing Department is offering **interest-free loans and grants to help qualifying home buyers bridge the gap** between what they can afford and the actual price of a house or condominium. If you are interested in the programs and want to see if you are qualified, you may go to the Department's website, www.cityofla.org/lahd or call them directly at (213) 808-8925.

I hope this is useful information for you. If you already own a home, please pass this information along to another member of your family or other members of our community who may benefit from the information. If my office can be of assistance, please don't hesitate to call us at (818) 901-5588.